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■ NIAGARA REGION

Slow, easy grows bus system

JEFF BOLICHOWSKI
QMI Agency

ST. CATHARINES — When it comes to rolling toward success, Niagara Region Transit can take a cue from the tortoise, say other region-wide transit operators across the province.

Slow and steady.
The Region's fledgling inter-municipal transit line is on a three-year pilot plan launched in September. Regional councillors recently heard it drew about 5,200 riders in November, and more detailed figures are coming next year.

see TRANSIT | page 2

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■ THE SOUND OF CHRISTMAS



The Celtic Fiddle band performs during the Fonthill Kinsmen seniors Christmas party held on Dec. 13 at the Pelham's old town hall on Canboro Rd.

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upfront

■ TRANSIT

Regional buses worked there. How about here?

FROM PAGE 1

With time, though, regional systems seem to have blossomed elsewhere.

In York Region, the 11-year-old amalgamated bus system shod to 21 million riders in 2011 from seven million in 2001, though they're going through an extended work stoppage now.

Not far away, Durham Region's bus system had 9.1 million riders last year. And Waterloo Region's buses drove close to 19 million passengers.

"It's long-term. It doesn't happen overnight," said Rick Leary, general manager of York Region Transit. "Don't think you're going to double or triple in one or two years."

York, Waterloo and Durham have single, unified transit systems. That differs from Niagara, where St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland have their own systems that connect to the regional system. Niagara Region owns its eight buses, but buys its pilot bus service from the cities.

The regional line swings through those three cities and to Niagara Region head-

quarters in Thorold. Buses also connect Port Colborne and Fort Erie to the rest of the system.

"We're not in the transit business," said Regional Chair Gary Burroughs of the possibility of running a single transit system in Niagara. "We'd need a triple majority if we even wanted to be."

That would mean winning over a majority of regional councillors and a majority of municipalities representing the majority of eligible voters in the last election across Niagara.

But Burroughs didn't rule out a unified system someday.

"I think as a pilot, it may well prove out to be, you know what, it has to be one transit system."

Hence the pilot, said Port Colborne Coun. David Barrick.

"We do need to build a case for why we should go to one system," he said. "We can't just go in heavy-handed and say, 'We're in the transit business now. This is what we're doing.'"

A unified transit system for all of Niagara is likely the way to go, said Barrick.

■ 613 CADET CORP: European battlefields trip set for April



The 613 Lincoln and Welland Regiment Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps will attend the 95th annual commemoration ceremonies for the Battle of Vimy Ridge in France.

Supplied photo

Vimy anniversary within reach

WAYNE CAMPBELL
PelhamNEWS Staff

PELHAM — They're one away from sending the whole corps to Vimy.

The 613 Lincoln and Welland Regiment Royal Canadian Army Cadet Corps in April will attend the 95th annual commemoration ceremonies for the Battle of Vimy Ridge in France.

"We have 33 of the 34 cadets signed up," said Leo Giovenazzo, the corps commanding officer.

The cost to send one cadet is \$2,700 and there's a Dec. 31 deadline to register and pay for the trip.

"It would be a shame to come so close and leave one cadet behind because they can't afford to go."

The army cadet corps draws members from Welland, Pelham and south Niagara.

While its headquarters is at the Fonthill legion hall, most of its members come from Welland, said Giovenazzo, who can be reached at 905-892-8208 or by e-mail at ll@coecoca.ca.

The army cadet corps will be one of 185 groups from across Canada who will attend the anniversary commemoration.

With adult chaperons, the local unit will fill a bus for a nine-day educational tour of

northern France and neighbouring countries. Cadets will take in tourist and cultural sites and visit First and Second World War battlefields where Canadians fought.

For more than the past year, the cadets have held fundraisers and service projects to raise money. On Jan. 14, the cadets will hold an electronics recycling day at the Fonthill legion.

"Unfortunately, this is after the registration date and won't help get the last cadet there, but will help with other expenses," Giovenazzo said.

To help finance the trip, cadets have approached service clubs, municipalities and

other potential sponsors.

The response has been generous, with large and small donations.

Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn donated \$4,200 from his mayor's gala last spring. More recently the Fonthill Lions Club donated \$500. Royal Canadian Legion Branch 613 has helped to fill the account.

"We're so close to giving all these young people a once-in-a-lifetime educational experience," Giovenazzo said.

"It would be a shame if we left someone behind."

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■ **HORTICULTURE:** Poinsettias a multimillion-dollar industry in Niagara

Research station helping to grow a better Christmas

DON FRASER
QMI Agency

ST. CATHARINES — Poinsettias are North America's top flowering potted plant and a multimillion-dollar Niagara industry.

Over the holidays, indoor spaces explode in red-and-green forests of these local specialty.

And a Niagara research centre has become a leader in helping growers take them in new commercial directions.

On Friday, the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre held an open house to showcase cutting-edge varieties perfected there.

Vineland is one of the leading places where we've provided the industry with a lot of practical information."

Wayne Brown, greenhouse floriculture specialist

Vineland is one of three major research institutions in Canada and the U.S. that work with major poinsettia breeders. The others are at North Carolina State University and the University of Florida.

"Realize the weather and light conditions are very different here in Ontario than in Florida," said Vineland greenhouse floriculture specialist Wayne Brown.

"We're introducing a number of varieties and comparing them to the currently available varieties here," Brown said.

"We're testing them for bigger branching ability, plant form, post-harvest shelf life, that kind of information."

The new varieties will have slightly different patterns of red, pink and white that may appeal to different markets.

These issues are vital to breeders and the industry, Brown said.

"And Vineland is one of the leading places where we've provided the industry with a lot of practical information."

Ontario alone produces 4.5 million of the Christmas classics a year, representing up to \$16.5 million in farm-gate value.

Niagara has about 35 producers — the largest concentration on the continent.

The local producers ship an estimated 3.5 million of the plants every year.

Poinsettia production in Niagara and the province has declined somewhat, however.

A rising Canadian dollar, the U.S. economic decline and increased competition have slowed exports south of the border.

But considerable markets for Ontario poinsettias still exist in Chicago and the Boston-New York-Philadelphia corridor.

Virtually nothing is imported from the U.S. into Canada.

One of the biggest players in Niagara is Jeffery's Greenhouses in St. Catharines, which works closely with Brown and the Vineland centre.

Jeffery's produces 150,000 pots of poinsettias, representing about 15% of its annual output. About 30% of the poinsettias go to points south.

"It's a long (duration) crop," said Rodd Gibson, Jeffery's general manager.

"The cuttings are started in July and it is a difficult crop to produce without any problems to get them to look just right before Christmas.

"No two years are alike with this plant; we're constantly learning."

"We target them for a Christmas sales date, so we can't have them ready too early or too late.

"And we're done with them right now," Gibson added. "We're all shipped out for the season."



JULIE JOCSAK QMI Agency

ABOVE: Gladys Carr and her grandson, Micah Porter, 4, are joined by their neighbour (not shown) Nancy Pierce at the Poinsettia Research Open House at the Vineland Research Station last Friday. The public was invited in to take a look at the different varieties and weigh in on their likes/dislikes and favourites. The open house was an effort to better establish an understanding of the consumer and what the consumer is looking for in poinsettias.

LEFT: Micah looks at some poinsettias.

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■perspective

Quebec guns for trouble

Unlike the rest of Canada, Quebec must think there are dangerous criminals, and even another Marc Lépine, lurking among law-abiding farmers and hunters whose names are in the doomed long-gun registry. If that is the case, those farmers and hunters should be outraged with the Liberal government of Jean Charest. They're being played as pawns.

Why, for example, would Quebec Public Safety Minister Robert Dutil announce his government will go to court if the Conservatives use their majority in Parliament to pass legislation abolishing the 16-year-old registry for rifles, shotguns and varmint-hunting pot-shooters?

Let's be straight. Marc Lépine, the gunman behind Montreal's 1982 Polytechnique massacre in 1989, had legally purchased the rifle he used to commit that outrage. The police okayed it, but it stopped nothing. No gun law can make police psychics, and treating law-abiding hunters and farmers as potential killers does not bring any clarity to anyone's crystal ball.

Now, Quebec wants to set aside the billion the Charest Liberals already squandered on top of an absolutely useless federal gun registry to set up an equally useless registry of its own — and throw more good money after bad.

The last time we looked Quebec was ready to get up and rush back again. I find it unjust and unfair that the data will be destroyed without first offering the Quebec government the possibility of recouping it? Dutil told a news conference.

He was flanked, of course, by police association members, gun-control advocates and women's groups. But he was not flanked by someone who was actually served by the federal gun registry. If the Charest Liberals truly want to inflict this expensive and useless legislation on their own citizens by going to court to score federal registry data, then Quebecers had best ready themselves to be taxed again.

Not at gunpoint, of course. But at tax time.

— Mark Bonokoski

comment

Lump of Coal – A Christmas Story

It's Monday now, early December, 2011.

Arnie filled out his application to start receiving his Canada Pension Plan retirement pension two days ago. Did it online. Piece of cake. A hundred times better laid out than all kinds of other stuff you can do, successfully or less successfully, with not so much, or very much, frustration and anger on the multitude of "It's so easy a child could do it" sites on "The Net."

All of our governments, whether it's the guy you hate or the guy



Arnie Dyker

you voted for (strange how often enough that can turn out to be the same guy), screw up on a regular basis.

Whichever series of technocrats put this one together though, they got it right. You shouldn't have to work harder filling out a form to

have them send you the benefits you earned as a working member of society than you did when you actually were a working member of society. And you don't.

Good job fellas. Simple form to fill out; then a simple signature form to send to a clearly spelled out address, and that's it. Credit where credit is due.

On Sunday, Arnie filled out his form to start collecting his OAS pension. Like the CPP, you are supposed to send the forms in five or six months before, as they used to say in the olden days when

everything arrived in an envelope, "The cheque is in the mail."

This, too, was an easy process, at least in a physical sense. You can't actually send this one in via the Internet, yet, but you can get the form there, which is what he did.

He would have used the ones they sent him in the summer, 2010 – same thing – but they're in a drawer somewhere, under who knows how many pounds of newspaper clippings, no longer functioning TV remotes, used batteries, unread magazines, dog treats and possibly a bottle or two of TUMS; where they lie sleeping labeled, "Important. Keep in an obvious place to be quickly found when needed."

Doesn't matter. Go online; push a couple buttons on the computer and "Voilà!" Got what you need.

The form itself is almost identical to the CPP one; cinch to complete.

Two small complaints, though. First, for the OAS one, Arnie, at last, found it easy to miss the "Where do you send this thing?" line, which led to him feeling like perhaps he'd shed a few brain cells while sauntering down to the room, where the computer sits, from the kitchen, where he was partaking of a pre-game sandwich.

Secondly, this is the big one, is the name itself. In the 1920s, a man might have been perfectly contented to admit, if he had existed then: "I'm ready to collect my OLD AGE pension now. I'm pretty well shot anyway."

But these days, the computer is ready to think of themselves as a geezer, a washed up former eater of solid foods. Despite the growing body of evidence to the contrary, we all would prefer to think of ourselves as still your spicy spring chicken, chili pepper popper kinda guys.

So here is a suggestion that would surely suck in one good-sized portion of spicy-pepper-chicken-man votes for any politician willing to take the plunge. The great part is that it doesn't even have to pass in Parliament. The only way it can become a folk hero to the complete collection of "Don't call me codger" cronies who vote more than any other group, just for tawdry in the effort.

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Time has not dulled sunshine list

GREG VAN MOORSEL
QMI Agency

Soon they'll be making a list at Queen's Park and checking it twice — not for Christmas but for tax time.

Make no mistake, though, it's a gift as good as it gets for taxpayers. That they won't be out until March 31, the list speaks volumes about growth in the size and cost of government and how tax dollars are used.

A roll call of the fattest paycheques in Ontario's multimillion-strong public sector, the list opens for all to see the T-4 slips of every public servant in the province pulling down salaries of \$100,000 or more a year.

Any perks they get are also factored in.

The media loves the list. So do opposition politicians. Even the odd divorce lawyer or bill collector has probably found it a godsend.

We're talking Ontario's annual public-sector salary disclosure list, "the sunshine list."

When introduced in 1996, it was almost exclusively the domain of just the kinds of public servants you'd expect: Hospital bosses and health-care executives, university presidents, civil-service poobahs, big-city police chiefs and managers.

In all, about 4,500 people cracked the list. That a small town of high-priced help.

By this year, inflated by a generation of wage hikes and a salary threshold frozen at \$100,000, the list had bulged to more than 70,000, up a whopping 11% from the year before. Think a city the size of Sarnia, Ont. Even ordinary working stiffs in the public sector — teachers, nurses, firefighters and police officers — were turning up on the list.

The question is, does a salary disclosure list that effectively shames the best-paid public servants, even if its stated goal is

openness and transparency for taxpayers, still have a place?

Back in 1996, when the then-Tory government brought in the list, it nicely dovetailed with premier Mike Harris's agenda. Harris was ready to axe government spending. Outing the highest-paid public servants with salaries and benefits most recession-wackies would likely could only dream of would create just enough envy in the public to take some of the heat off the axe wielding.

Too, accused of letting public-sector salaries slip to buy labour peace while wage freezes and pink slips are the reality for many in the private sector, the Ministry of Finance would likely prefer not to unwrap the list.

After all, nothing screams out a government that can't balance its chequebook like a list that effectively says nearly one in 10 public servants is feeling no pain.

see VAN MOORSEL, page 5

see DYKER, page 5

■ VAN MOORSEL

Ontarians look forward to list's transparency

FROM PAGE 4

Sure, inflation has made a mockery of the sunshine list. The minimum \$100,000 needed to card the list in 1990 would be nearly \$136,000 today if the higher cost of living were factored in, eliminating many now on the list.

Still, the list isn't just about the bloating ranks of the six-figure-salary public servant. For taxpayers, its value also extends to horror stories they'd likely never otherwise hear about. Who could forget, for example, the former Hydro One chief executive, Eleanor Clitherhouse, with the electrifying \$2.2-million salary, a limo, driver and membership to a fistful of exclusive clubs?

Throwing it all out there also tells taxpayers that

employers in the same sector should know what each other is paying and expect to justify any wild disparities. On the first list, because those blind spots were lit up, the president of one Ontario's smallest universities, Wilfrid Laurier, was pulling down bigger bucks than the head of the University of Toronto, its largest school and one of the biggest on the continent.

Forget that taboo about re-gifting. When they're refusing to get their taxes in this spring, many Ontarians will look forward — with good reason — to the sunshine list. It's not perfect, but it's one ray of government transparency they've come to expect.

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■ TRAGEDY: Bill Campbell dies in Hwy. 401 collision

Crash claims Notre Dame hockey dad

MARYANNE FIRTH
Tribune Staff

WELLAND — Notre Dame College School has lost a beloved hockey dad.

Bill Campbell, of Fonthill, was killed Dec. 13 in an early morning collision on Hwy. 401.

The 52-year-old died at the scene of the crash, which involved his car and a tractor-trailer in the eastbound lanes of the highway near Foldsides, east of Ingersoll. The collision

occurred at about 3 a.m.

Campbell's daughter Tiffany, a Grade 12 student at Notre Dame, was at a tournament in London with the Welland school's girls hockey team when she learned the news about her father.

The team, of which Tiffany is the assistant captain, had played only one game in the two-day event when they heard about the tragedy, said coach Kevin Grand.

The decision was immediately made to pull out of

the tournament and return home to show support for the Campbell family.

"She's understandably broken-hearted," Grand said of Tiffany, who he called a "very talented hockey player."

"All the girls were very upset."

"We knew him as a father who supported his daughter," Grand said of Campbell.

He was also supportive of son Billy, who is in Grade 10 at the Smith St. school.

Many students at Notre

Dame are familiar with Campbell, who often showed up to his children's various sporting events.

Though he hadn't heard any details about funeral arrangements, Grand said when the time comes the entire team will be there to comfort their teammate and her family.

"We will be there to support her to no end."

The driver of the tractor-trailer was taken to hospital as a precaution and later released.

■ DYKER

Buying into SPRIGHTLY may boost egos

FROM PAGE 4

All you have to do is stand up in the Big House to announce to all of Canada (and the media) will be all over it, so everyone in the country will read all about it the next day, hear about it on the six o'clock news the very same day; "I propose that we drop the Old Age Security benefit

and replace it with exactly the same thing, to be called the 'Small Pension Retirement Incentive Given Happily To Long-lived Youngsters' - 'Sprightly' for short."

The name itself is not vital — only that it makes the fellas feel better about themselves. And the acronym, of course, has to make the former Old

Age Pension applicants feel like, "Yeah, THAT's me!"

And then, that right there is one representative of the people who will not only score a perfect hundred percent with a huge huge block of voters, but also preclude any other man in this our beloved country having to sit there, staring out

the window at the holiday lights he just this very day lit up; then down to a form with the words glaring back at him from the pinnacle of the page, "OLD AGE Pension" and thinking, "SHEESH!"

"Some Christmas present!"

Arnie Dyker is a writer living in Pelham.

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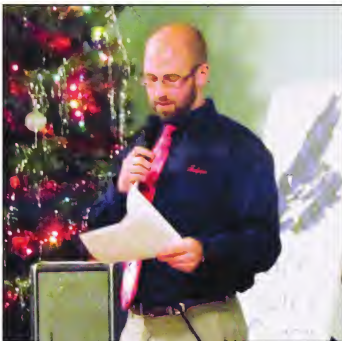
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■ SENIORS WELCOME SANTA



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ABOVE: Kinsmen member Andrew Doyle serves as emcee during the Fonthill Kinsmen seniors Christmas party held on Dec. 13 at the Pelham's old town hall on Canboro Rd.

ABOVE LEFT: No Christmas party would be complete without a visit from Jolly St. Nick, who handed out gifts to seniors who attended the party.



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■ **FACS:** Gift of Hope campaign aids Early Years Centre

Providing a place for parent and child to bond

KELSEA SWACKHAMMER
For PelhamNEWS

WELLAND — Raising a new baby can be tough.

"Babies don't come with an instruction manual tucked in their diapers," says Nancy Lisi, a program co-ordinator at the Ontario Early Years Centre in Welland.

Open to anyone, the Early Years Centre gives baby and adult time to bond — without the constant distraction of laundry, phone calls or text messages.

The centre has both sign-up programs with a set time frame, such as an infant massage session — a favourite among moms — and drop-in programs for which parents or grandparents can drop in with their child and take part in many different activities and games.

"Become an unplugged parent," Lisi says.

"If you're looking at your phone, you miss your child's

eyes light up when they figure out a new toy. You learn to treasure the little things."

Though the centre is a lot of fun, its main focus is on helping a child develop to the best of their ability.

"It's the most important time of their life, ages zero to six, when their brain develops so rapidly."

Children learn through responsive programs that fit to their needs, as opposed to trying to fit children into a structured program.

"The idea is not for the child to make a collage, but instead gives them a chance to experience glue for the first time, to understand what it does — it sticks. It's children learning through play," Lisi explains.

The centre also loans out books, age-appropriate toys and other resources for parents. Parents and grandparents also have the opportunity to chat with staff

one on one, consult a lactation consultant or use one of the screening programs the centre has in place. Its mobile unit lends toys and resources to parents who might not be able to make it to a centre.

"I've had parents come in after participating in the program for five, six years, and tell me, 'I don't know how I could have done it without the Early Years Centre.' It's rewarding."

Family and Children's Services Niagara is the host program for the Early Years Centre in Welland. Last year, with money raised from FACS' Gift of Hope campaign, the agency supplemented the centre's staff training, francophone resources and toy-lending program.

Kelsea Swackhammer is a student at Welland Centennial Secondary School on co-op placement at The Tribune.



KELSEA SWACKHAMMER PelhamNEWS Photo

Ann Lambert, a registered early childhood educator; Bev Lessarde, lead early childhood developer; Nancy Lisi, program co-ordinator; and Sheri Duffin, a registered early childhood educator, of the Early Years Centre in Welland sit with some resources and toys to help parents with their child's development.

Merry Christmas!

Debbie, Miller and I extend our best wishes for a festive and memorable Christmas and holiday season. Good health and prosperity in 2012!

-TIM HUDAK, MPP



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■ **COMMUNITY:** Special deliveries made today of food and toys

Pelham Christmas hampers go out early

WAYNE CAMPBELL
PelhamNEWS Staff

PELHAM — Pelham Cares has stepped up scheduling of its Christmas hamper program for needy families.

On Wednesday, it packed the hampers. Today it is delivering them.

"We packed for 51 families today," Pelham Cares

vice-president Jane Gilmour said Wednesday at the old Fenwick fire station.

"We expect more families to come through and are ready for them."

Usually, hampers are packed and delivered as close to Christmas as possible. But the time to gather materials and make any additional purchases during

the week before the holiday became too tight, she said.

For more than 25 years, Pelham Cares has provided turkey or ham dinners.

Volunteers also toss in toys, pet food, clothing and other items as required to meet a profile of each family. Families apply through a screening process setup by local service agencies.

Christmas hamper co-ordinator Colleen McCarthy said the 20 volunteers who packed Wednesday have been doing so for many years and have the system down well.

The hampers are filled from many sacks.

For 20 years, the Fonthill Volunteer Firefighters Association has held a Christmas toy drive. This year it was between Dec. 6 to Dec. 13. On Monday, firefighters packed 59 large plastic bags with toys, and in some cases with pet food, to match known families.

The Pelham Community Food Drive, held the first Saturday of December, provides non-perishable food that goes to the Christmas hampers as well as the food bank. Pelham Cares



Supplied Photo

Fonthill Lions Club presents Pelham Cares with 10 turkeys for its Christmas program. From left are Lion Doug Gaylor, Pelham Cares vice-president Jane Gilmour and client services co-ordinator Betty Brown.

arranges for hams and turkeys, potatoes and fresh vegetables.

Meanwhile, local schools help with drives of their own. The longest running is at A.K. Wigg Public School. The school sends out letters to neighbours and a week later students driven by volunteer parents collect from homes around the Fonthill school.

"We sent out 2,200 letters," said teacher Marty Triano. "Usually we receive about 1,000 bags of food back."

"That seems to be what we are getting today," he said Wednesday in the school parking lot.

Grade 7 and 8 students who collected the food transferred it to six cars and a truck to get it to the old Fenwick fire hall.

"That seems to be more

than we've sent before."

For A.K. Wigg, the neighbourhood treats the event as a tradition.

"We are asked when the letters are coming out," Triano said. "Many have already given to the community food drive. They are generous."

Gilmour said until Pelham Cares gets a permanent home, there will always be a lot of physical shifting of food, clothing, toys and other items around the town than is necessary.

"This year, we are here. The past few years at the old Donut Diner. Who knows next year? We're all getting older," she said about the volunteers trying to do the job.

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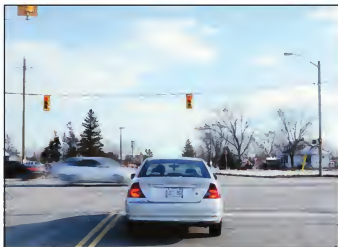
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TRANSPORTATION: Highway widening progressing, ministry says



DAVE JOHNSON Staff Photo

A car sits at the temporary stoplights at the corner of Port Robinson Rd. and Hwy. 406 as cars pass by on the highway.

Port Robinson overpass to cost \$2.5 million

DAVE JOHNSON
PelhamNEWS Staff

WELLAND — An overpass will be built at a cost of \$2.5 million to carry Port Robinson Rd. traffic over the soon-to-be expanded Hwy. 406.

Ministry of Transportation communications co-ordinator Astrid Poel said the overpass itself will cost \$2 million, and the additional \$500,000 will go toward purchasing property on the southeast side of the road and highway.

A drive past the road shows a house on the southeast side filled with construction equipment, while on the northeast side, a new home is under construction.

"The construction of the new house will not be impacted by the new bridge overpass," said Poel.

The new overpass will be built south of the existing Port Robinson Rd.

Poel said "at grade" crossings are not permitted on the highway and the options open to the ministry were to close the road up or create an entrance. An overpass exists just more than a kilometre south at Merritt Rd.

During an environmental assessment process, Poel said, the ministry determined an overpass would be built at Port Robinson Rd.

"The public was made aware and were very supportive of the decision."

As for the rest of the project, work on the Hwy. 406 expansion from Port Robinson Rd. in Thorold to East Main St. in Welland is progressing well.

Poel said site preparation will continue on the side of the highway throughout the winter as weather permits and road work will start in the spring.

The highway is undergoing a \$61.8-million twinning, which will include construction of a new bridge over the old Welland Canal and Welland River.

Poel said this expansion is the final project of three contracts to expand the highway to four lanes from two from Thorold to Welland. The first two projects were completed last year and the fully-expanded highway is expected to be open sometime in 2014.

A new commuter parking lot will be built on Woodlawn Rd. About 20,000 drivers use the local stretch of daily.

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■ **GREAT WHITE OAKS GIVEAWAY:** Visit The Tribune's website and Facebook page

Winning is easy in this contest

QMI Agency

If you like to win, then Sun Media Niagara has something special in store for you.

How would you enjoy walking away with a free one-year gym membership, a romantic getaway for two or a girls' night out for four?

Then wait no further ... and enter for your chance to win in our exciting new online sweepstakes.

The Tribune, St. Catharines Standard and Niagara Falls Review have teamed up to offer readers a series of exciting online contests.

The first, launched on our websites and Facebook sites today, is our Great White Oaks Giveaway.

This contest is made up of prizes worth a grand total of close to \$2,500.

Readers have the chance to win one of three amazing giveaways, courtesy of the White Oaks Resort and Spa in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The first prize, with a value totalling \$1,200, is a full-year adult membership at The Club at White Oaks. What



A girls' night out is one of the prizes in Sun Media Niagara's new online contest.

Supplied photo

better time of year to start thinking of hitting that treadmill again.

The second is a romantic getaway for two that includes luxury accommodation for the night, dinner for two at the award-winning LIV Restaurant, breakfast for two and a welcome bottle of wine — worth an amazing \$585.

The third big prize is a fantastic girls' getaway for four, which includes a luxury White Oaks suite, in-room movie and munchies, dinner for four at Play Urban Cafe

and breakfast for four. This fab four offer is worth \$670.

All you have to do to enter for your chance to win is visit one of these three websites — www.wellandtribune.ca, www.stcatharinesstandard.ca or www.niagarafallsreview.ca — and follow the instructions on our Sweepstakes contest box.

You can also enter via our Facebook pages — www.facebook.com/wellandtribune, www.facebook.com/stcatharinesstandard or www.facebook.com/niagarafallsreview. Viewers can enter once daily during the contest, which runs from today to Jan. 8.

The draws will be held Jan. 9, and three winners will be randomly selected.

This contest is open to Niagara residents only. Readers age 19 or over can take part.

For more information or for the rules and regulations for the sweepstakes, visit one of our three websites or Facebook pages listed above. Good luck!

■ **HEALTH CARE:** Mortality rating improves

Watchdog gives NHS a better grade

GRANT LAFLECHE
QMI Agency

ST. CATHARINES — Patient safety is improving at Niagara Health System, according to a national health-care watchdog group.

A Canadian Institute for Health Information report released last week said the mortality rating at NHS hospitals has improved. For 2010-11, the institute gave the NHS a score of 93, an improvement over the 105 it was scored at for 2009-10.

A score of 100 or higher indicates there were more patient deaths than expected, and is based on the mortality rate of patients with pneumonia, heart disease and heart attacks, which account for 80% of hospital deaths.

NHS chief of surgery Dr. Jeff Cranford said the institute's ratings are a disputed marker in health-care circles as a measure of how effective a hospital system is. The calcu-

lation does not, for instance, account for the demographics of a particular hospital system, which might impact patient mortality levels.

"Nevertheless, it's a good thing," he said of the institute's findings.

Cranford said the NHS has taken steps to improve patient care, including the development of a sepsis protocol to identify the early onset of a deadly sepsis infection; an early warning system that identifies abnormal changes in a patient's vital signs to trigger responsive care; and strategy to reduce to dangerous blood clotting.

The institute report can be found online at www.chi.ca/chi-ext-portal/internet/en/document/health-system-performance/.



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■ **pelhambriefs**

SHAVER OUTBREAK OVER

ST. CATHARINES — The C. difficile outbreak at the Hotel Dieu Shaver rehabilitation centre has been declared over.

The centre and the regional public health department declared the outbreak over early Monday.

There were only three patients at the peak of the outbreak being treated at the centre for C. difficile infections.

However, two other C. difficile patients sent from the centre to Niagara Health System hospitals later died. The outbreak was declared on Oct. 19.

Christmas and New Years Holiday Deadlines for the Sun Media Classified Network

TRIBUNE

Publication Date

Dec 21
Dec 22
Dec 23
Dec 24
Dec 26
Dec 27
Dec 28
Dec 29
Dec 30
Dec 31
Jan 3

Word Ad Deadline

Dec 19 at 1 p.m.
Dec 21 at 1 p.m.
Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 23 at 1 p.m.
Dec 23 at 10 a.m.
Dec 23 at 10 a.m.
Dec 27 at 1 p.m.
Dec 28 at 1 p.m.
Dec 29 at 1 p.m.
Dec 30 at 10 a.m.
Dec 30 at 1 p.m.

Display & Photo Deadline

Dec 19 at 1 p.m.
Dec 20 at 1 p.m.
Dec 21 at 1 p.m.
Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 27 at 1 p.m.
Dec 27 at 1 p.m.
Dec 28 at 1 p.m.
Dec 29 at 1 p.m.
Dec 29 at 1 p.m.

PELHAM NEWS & INPORT - word and display

Publication Date

Dec 23
Dec 30

Deadline

Dec 16 at 10 a.m.
Dec 23 at 10 a.m.

CELEBRATIONS PAGE

Publication Date

Dec 24
Dec 31

Deadline

Dec 19 at 1 p.m.
Dec 27 at 10 a.m.

Tribune Office will be closed December 26, 2011 and January 2, 2012.

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■ **READERS REMEMBER:** Ralph Hogue passes down a family's Christmas tale

Mending toys, scrubbing old dolls bring smiles to kids



WAYNE CAMPBELL Staff Photo

Ralph Hogue holds a truck of memories, one of the leftover toys his grandfather helped to repair and shine to become Christmas presents for children in a poor northern Ontario community.

RALPH HOGUE
For The Welland Tribune

PELHAM — This is a heart-warming incident that my mother used to tell us on Christmas Eve.

I thought it was worth sharing with everyone.

When she was a little girl, her parents immigrated to Canada from London, England, at the turn of the 20th century. The area Grandpa Petit selected was Copper Cliff, Ont., because the community needed stone masons.

Unfortunately, work opportunities were not very plentiful and it was difficult to eke out a living. As Christmas drew near, Grandma knew that Christmas Day could be a very bleak morning for the children.

However, the spirit of Christmas certainly prevailed on Christmas Eve, when one of the Copper Cliff merchants, who was aware of their plight, gathered together a batch of broken toys that needed mending. Not only that, but some older dolls that required a good scrub.

The merchants and Grandpa

*Spirit
of the
Season*
Readers
Remember

patched up the toys that night; Grandma attended to the dolls. When my mother and her siblings awoke on Christmas Day, there was ample evidence around a gaily decorated Christmas tree that Santa had made his faithful visit.

For my grandparents, it was a very joyful, happy and very merry Christmas — because someone cared.

Readers Remember is a series of stories based on Christmas season experiences submitted by Welland Tribune readers. It appears daily through Dec. 24.

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The whole community is invited to attend.

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**Jan. 1 - 10:00 am - New Year's Worship - Joint service
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sports

■ GYMNASTICS

Club gets new start with coach Houghting

EDDIE CHAU
PelhamNEWS Staff

WELLAND — The kind of gymnast you are tomorrow will be the result of how you train today.

That sentence is splashed across the green walls of Aereo Gymnastics Club where everyday students from all over Niagara come to train in the sport.

Any given day of the week girls can be seen walking the balance beam or swinging off the uneven bars. For fun the students will relax by tumbling on the mats or laughing and smiling while doing cartwheels.

And to think a year ago the club's future was up in the air. It's been a rebuilding year for the club.

Last fall the Lincoln St. based club closed for a few months with the departure of then head coach Julia Roberto. With no coach and facility to practice out of, the members of Aereo's competitive team were left without an outlet for their talent.

Enter Ashley Houghting, former co-captain of the University of Washington Huskies gymnastics team and Welland native, who stepped into bringing her expertise to the club. Houghting, a level two certified gymnastics coach, has competed in every level of the sport from recreational to NCAA Division I.



EDDIE CHAU Staff Photo

The newly relaunched competitive team from Aereo Gymnastics in Welland will begin to compete in January. Pictured are, front row: Emma Biggar, Alyssa Desjardin, Alexa Cassolato, Megan Tessier and Faith Ruber. Back row: Abby Vanderlinde, Emily Stout, Ava Lawson, Sydney Bisci and Ava Arseneault. Absent: Alexa Massey.

Houghting always had a love for the club, the very place she got her gymnastics start. She returned to the club with the aim of building a competitive team her way.

"There was really no team left," said Houghting when she returned to Aereo. "We really had to start from scratch."

Aereo's competitive team currently consists of nine girls between the ages of five to seven years old, who each put in close to 10 hours of training a week several days a week in preparation for the team's first competition next month.

"It's a really exciting time for us. They are just about

ready," Houghting said of competing in the Gymnastics Energy Chinese New Year — Year of the Dragon competition which takes place Jan. 27-29 in St. Catharines.

The club will train two via two different programs. Ontario Competitive Program (OCP) and Ontario Development Program

(ODP). The OCP program focuses on competition aspect of gymnastics while ODP is designed to improve quality of gymnastics.

So far the girls have been working really hard and are very dedicated to the craft Houghting said.

"They spend a lot of time together. It's a huge com-

mitment but they enjoy it. The kids work hard to get skills and improve their conditioning."

Houghting hopes to enter the competitive team in four competitions in 2012. Whether win or loss the most important thing to the coach is that the students have fun.






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■ **BASEBALL:** Bullett Proof Baseball Academy moves into larger space

Bigger facility, bigger dreams

EDDIE CHAU
PelhamNEWS Staff

WELLAND — It's a swing and a miss for young Nicholas Loibl.

A yellow ball comes hurtling at the baseball player from an automated throwing machine inside a batting cage. Loibl swings and misses for a second time.

Sensing Loibl's frustration, former Chicago Cubs outfielder Scott Bullett enters the cage and gives the young batter some pointers.

"Take a good stance and ease into it," said Bullett of swinging the bat. Seconds later, Loibl knocks one across the cage.

"That's the way! You got it," Bullett said with a smile big enough to light a room. As a dozen children line up to get their shot at the batting cages, Bullett greets every one of them with a high five or a hug.

For Bullett, the president and head instructor at the Bullett Proof Baseball Academy, his passion for the sport now lies in helping his students be the best they can be.

"We have a lot of kids that come

through here. Some have gone on to play in the Major League," Bullett said. "We're building kids. Making them better people and play better ball."

There will be plenty of room for the students to train at the academy after moving into a 1,950-square-metre facility across the way from its old facility in the Welland Fairgrounds. The new facility has enough room for a couple of pitching machines, three clay pitching mounds, three batting cages and an infield practice area.

Bullett had operated in the smaller facility for the past 15 years. He described the old building as no wider than "two batting cages."

"When the opportunity came up we knew we had to expand," Bullett said. "We can do bigger and better things here."



Bullett

the help of Mitchell Karnay & Wyatt Glancy.

In the closing minutes of the game, Elijah Taylor netted the game winner from Narbonne and Jack Obdeyn, goalie Carter Nicholas, and his posse of defenders: Owen Darling, Elliot Song, Karnay & Nicholas Longo were strong in the defensive zone to lead the way to the victory.

PANTHERS SHOWERED BY METEORS

The Star Tite Bantam Pelham Panthers were showered with four goals by the Fort Erie Meteors last Thursday night in the third period. Mitchell Karnay made a nice defence to defence pass to set up Nicholas Longo for a shot from the point that soared past the Welland netminder. Glancy picked up his second goal of the game (from Colangelo) as did Narbonne (from Taylor & Longo).

Jack Obdeyn added another goal to the scoreboard with the help of Glancy & Elliot Song, and Taylor capped off the game with his second goal (unassisted). Goalie Tyler Scott earned the 9-2 victory.

On Sunday, the Tigers faced Pelham No. 3, the Spitfires. After an exciting period, the Spitfires held a 3-0 lead. But the Tigers' patience paid off in the third when Harmon Narbonne went high to beat the netminder with

The Bullett Proof Baseball Academy held its grand reopening on Saturday with about 200 in attendance

throughout the afternoon. In lieu of facility use fees, Bullett asked people to bring nonperishable food and toy donations for Project

SHARE.

The academy is located at 1100 Niagara St. For more information visit www.bullettproofbaseball.com.

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TRIBUNE Publication Date	Word Ad Deadline	Display & Photo Deadline
Dec 21	Dec 20 at 1 p.m.	Dec 19 at 1 p.m.
Dec 22	Dec 21 at 1 p.m.	Dec 20 at 1 p.m.
Dec 23	Dec 22 at 1 p.m.	Dec 21 at 1 p.m.
Dec 24	Dec 23 at 1 p.m.	Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 26	Dec 23 at 10 a.m.	Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 27	Dec 23 at 10 a.m.	Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 28	Dec 27 at 1 p.m.	Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 29	Dec 28 at 1 p.m.	Dec 27 at 1 p.m.
Dec 30	Dec 29 at 1 p.m.	Dec 28 at 1 p.m.
Dec 31	Dec 30 at 10 a.m.	Dec 29 at 1 p.m.
Jan 3	Dec 30 at 1 p.m.	Dec 29 at 1 p.m.

PELHAM NEWS & INPORT - word and display

Publication Date	Deadline
Dec 23	Dec 16 at 10 a.m.
Dec 30	Dec 23 at 10 a.m.

CELEBRATIONS PAGE

Publication Date	Deadline
Dec 24	Dec 19 at 1 p.m.
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■ **EDUCATION:** Online poll will offer pupils chance to speak out on issues

DSBN wants to get involved in school issues

SHAWN JEFFORDS
QMI Agency

ST. CATHARINES — An Ontario first time, District School Board of Niagara will ask its 14,800 high school students to weigh in on the issues affecting them most.

The board's student senate will create an online survey that will poll students on issues like bullying, their use of social media, nutrition and the "livability" of their schools.

It's all about empowering students, said board student trustee Evan Vassallo.

If important issues were not being raised, we can point to the data and say this is what the students want for this particular decision," he said.

Vassallo and fellow student trustee Joelle Schenck

brought the survey idea to DSBN's student senate. The pair participated in an Ontario-wide survey and thought it might help get into the minds of local students.

"They're the ones in the system," Schonberg said. "It's their education, and it's giving them the chance to have a voice. They're extremely valuable assets."

The survey will consist of 10 Yes or No questions on a broad range of topics. One school-specific question will be attached to each survey for the students.

It will be posted from Feb. 1 to 17 and the results will be generated on the Feb. 28 board meeting.

"It was also something we thought we could do to better utilize the student senate," Vassallo said. "We have this

great group of kids, but in the past we haven't had too many big projects they can do to affect change in Niagara."

Superintendent of secondary schools John Stainsby said having access to the student data could be a valuable planning tool for the board.

We have bright students with good ideas about education," he said. "This gives us the opportunity to reach out to every kid and say, here's your opportunity to provide feedback."

Stainsby said the student senate wants to include the feedback from a diverse group of students.

"We want feedback from all walks of the school," he said. "Regardless of the socio-economics or what classes they're in, it gives the opportunity to be listened to."

■ **HOCKEY:** Three games

Tigers go hunting on the road

For PelhamNEWS

The McDonalds AtoMc Tigers faced another busy weekend with three road games.

The Tigers handled Welland No.1 in a one-sided match. Wyatt Glancy lead the way with a hat trick and two assists. Tyler Scott netted two goals (1A). Single goals were scored by Harmon Narbonne (6 assists), Jack Obedyn, Elijah Taylor (2As), Drew Colangelo (1A), Elliot Song (1A), Owen Darling (4As) and Nicolas Longo (1A). Mitchell Karmay and Dan Durkin picked up a pair of helpers each and Carter Nicholas made some highlight-reel worthy saves on the way to the victory.

Welland No. 2 were the

Tigers' next opponents. Welland said one past goalie, Tyler Scott, early in the first frame to take the lead. Harmon Narbonne opened the floodgates late in the first, as he evened the score with the help of Colton Morrison.

Two more Tigers' goals found their mark before the end of the period: Drew Colangelo scored from Elliot Song and Owen Darling. Dan Durkin found the netting from Narbonne and Song. A Welland goal early in the third period was answered by Elijah Taylor from Jack Obedyn and Colangelo and an empty netter by Dan

Durkin from Elliot Song and Carter Nicholas put the stamp on the win for Scott.

The Tigers' final game found them facing off against Niagara-on-the-Lake No.3. Tyler Scott was the 1st the light up the scoreboard from Nicholas Longo. NOTL responded immediately and again, in the second period.

In the third, Harmon Narbonne pulled the trigger on two quick goals (from Wyatt Glancy & Owen Darling, and from Dan Durkin and Scott) to regain the lead. Another NOTL goals evened it up and goalie, Carter Nicholas, had to settle for the tie.

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■ CHURCH LISTING: Celebrating Christmas

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CHURCH

105 Welland Rd.
Dec. 24: Christmas Eve service 7 p.m.
Dec. 25: Christmas Day service with Holy Communion 10:45 a.m.

ST. ANN'S

834 Canboro Rd.
Dec. 24: Christmas Eve family mass 5 p.m., Mass during the night (Midnight Mass) 11 p.m.
Dec. 25: Christmas Day masses 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.
Dec. 31: Holy Hour and Reconciliation 4 p.m. to 4:45 p.m., Vigil Mass 5 p.m.
Jan. 1: Masses 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.

ST. ALEXANDER

50 Pelham Town Square
Dec. 20: Parish celebration of Reconciliation 7 p.m.
Dec. 24: Mass at twilight or sundown 5 p.m. (children's program 4:30 p.m.), card singing, readings 8 p.m., mass 8:30 p.m., carol singing, readings 11:30 p.m., mass at Midnight
Dec. 25: Masses 9 a.m., 11 a.m.
Dec. 31: Mass at 5 p.m.
Jan. 1: Masses 9 a.m., 11 a.m.
Jan. 8: Epiphany, masses 9 a.m., 11

a.m.

HOLY TRINITY ANGLICAN 1557 PELHAM ST.

Dec. 18: 4th Advent Holy Eucharist 8:30 a.m., service in story and song 10 a.m.
Dec. 24: Holy Eucharist with liturgy for young families with children 5:30 p.m., Holy Eucharist 11 p.m.
Dec. 25: Holy Eucharist 9:30 a.m.
Jan. 1: Holy Eucharist 8:30 a.m. and 10 a.m.
Jan. 8: Epiphany Holy Eucharist 8:30 a.m. and 10 a.m.

FONTHILL BAPTIST 1414

Pelham
Dec. 24: Service 7 p.m.
Dec. 25: Service 10 a.m.

FENWICK UNITED CHURCH

Church St. at Canboro Fenwick
Dec. 24 Family Service 7 p.m., Candlelight Communion, 10 p.m.
Dec. 25 - Christmas Day 10:30 a.m. with the congregation from Fonthill United Church
Jan. 1 - Worship at Fonthill United Church
Jan. 8 - Muffins and coffee in the Church Hall 9:30 p.m. Worship 10:30 a.m.

AROUND TOWN**SUNDAY, JAN 1**

LEGION NEW YEAR'S DAY
Make a toast to the new year starting at 1 p.m. at Royal Canadian Legion Branch 613 Talbot 341 Hwy 20 E. Fonthill. Appetizers and friendly comradeship.

FRIDAY, JAN. 6

LEGION LUNCH
Baby beef liver and onions, and/or sliced roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Royal Canadian Legion Branch 613 Talbot 141 Hwy 20 E. Fonthill. Cost \$9. Take out orders available by phoning 905-892-6293.

TUESDAY, JAN. 10

MESSY CHURCH
at Holy Trinity Church, 1557 Pelham Street, Fonthill from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. FREE hot dinner, music, prayer, crafts and fun. A time for families to enjoy being together for a Messy Epiphany. Everyone is welcome! Find us on our Facebook page Holy Trinity Fonthill.

SUNDAY, JAN 15

FENWICK LIONESS
Soup and Bread Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. at the Fenwick Lions Club.

999 Church St., Fenwick. Selection of homemade soups, variety of breads, dessert, coffee, tea and juice. \$7 per person.

ONGOING

TUESDAY NIGHT BINGO
St. Ann's Parish, 834 Canboro Rd., Fenwick, 7 p.m. Continues every Tuesday to the end of June. Wheelchair accessible. Chance to win 1000. 905-892-6123.

ST. ALEXANDER PASTA NIGHT
first Thursday of every month at St. Alexander Church, Town Square, Fonthill. Admission: \$9 for adults, \$4 for children age four to 12 and children under three free. All you can eat red and white sauce penne, meatballs, sausage, garlic bread, salads and more. Catered by Antipasto's.

RENT A GEEK

One-on-one Computer Help with computer systems specialist Dan Wallace. He is available to help with your questions every other Friday between 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Pelham Public Library. Fee \$10 per half hour with a half hour minimum. Includes use of a laptop. Payment reserves your place, since space is limited. Please

register in person at the Pelham Public Library Fonthill branch.

WOMEN'S OPEN MIC

Entertainment Night at the Cafe On Main, 1455 Pelham St., Fonthill. on the last Friday of every month from September to June. This event is an opportunity for women of all ages and talents: perform as a musician, poet or comedian, in an encouraging environment. Sign up for performers is at 7 p.m., show starts at 8 p.m. Featured artist set at 10 p.m. For more information go to www.WomensMusicNetwork.ca.

ALZHEIMER SOCIETY

of Niagara Region Support Groups for Caregivers meets the first Tuesday of each month, except July and August, 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. at Rapelle Lodge, 277 Plymouth Rd., Welland. For info call 905-67-3914.

ALZHEIMER SOCIETY

of Niagara Region Support Groups for Caregivers meets the third Monday of each month, except July and August, 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. at Alzheimer Society, 403 Ontario St. Unit 1, St. Catharines. For info call 905-687-3914.

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